



**"For The Sake Of Our Children, It's Time To
Confront The Hypocrisy In Our Culture"**

"A Bible Commentary On Jeremiah 23"

"Effective Expositions For Life"

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Introduction

As we begin this study today, I would like to start by mentioning the cover photo which is a picture of my wife, JoAnne, and me on one of our several trips to the country of Rwanda. The photo was taken at a school with over 1,400 students where we shared the Gospel message with these children. These children are living in the country where in 1994 a tragic genocide occurred. In just over 100 days from April until August, over one million people were literally butchered by their neighbors, their so-called friends, some relatives, and yes, by many of the church members from where they went to church. This was one of the bloodiest genocides ever known to man in such a short time. This blood bath took place because of a tribal conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes who had experienced conflicts for many years. However, if you will check with religious historians, you will find that back in the late 1960's, there had been a religious revival of great proportion.

In questioning several of the new government officials on some of my visits to the country of Rwanda, they told me that in spite of the revival, the people turned completely against each other because they really didn't have a living relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, but instead, they were just simply active in their religion in the churches and communities where they lived. Now I am sure that many people were truly saved, but the majority were just professors and not possessors of genuine Christianity. Therefore, when the conflict came just before 1994, the people became killers instead of friends and neighbors.

The reason I want to draw your attention to this horrible event in history is to hopefully impress upon your minds how the degeneration of a society and its culture can ultimately end in disaster for its people, and especially its children. These types of degeneration and decline are much more than we would like to admit, the results of total hypocrisy by the politicians, the preachers, and the people in these dying nations. The burden that I carry especially for America today is heavy on my heart because of the terrible political disaster that we are presently in, and because of the religious phonies who preach in our pulpits resulting in phonies sitting in our church pews. It would seem to me after studying the Bible for almost 60 years that we are in the same mess that Israel was in when Jeremiah the prophet came to cry out against their hypocrisy and overt wickedness. Things were out of control in Israel spiritually, morally and judicially just because of the evil hypocrisy of the people, especially the religious leaders. Therefore, I want us to take a look at Jeremiah Chapter 23, and see the evident similarities that America has today with the nation of Israel just before God destroyed the country and allowed Babylon to take the people away to captivity. And, I want to say that I see the same thing happening in other countries of the world like Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and believe it or not, many countries in Africa that are being overrun by Muslims and people forced to die or turn to Mohammedism. It is my sincere prayer that this study from the Book of Jeremiah might be used of God to shake us up until we repent of our hypocrisy and return to God in brokenness and humility before we suffer the same fate as Israel!

I. NOTICE JEREMIAH'S CANDID WARNING TO THE POLITICIANS. vs. 1-8

We are told by Old Testament scholars that Jeremiah was called by God to the prophetic ministry when he was around 21 years old. He, in fact came on the scene about sixty years after the death of Isaiah. And, whereas Isaiah's message was directed to both the Northern and Southern Kingdom of Israel, Jeremiah's was basically a message to warn the Southern Kingdom of impending judgment which was coming from God because of their defiant rebellion against God and His Word. This judgment was going to be in the form of the wicked nation of Babylon taking Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom captive after destroying the city, the Jewish Temple, and by killing thousands and thousands of people. Sad to say, when Jeremiah preached the truth to the Southern Kingdom with its capitol in Jerusalem, the people basically laughed him to scorn from the leaders on down, and they mocked him and the message God had given him to deliver to His people. In other words, just like the day in which we live, people made fun of the true man of God and asked for easy and light preachers. They got many of these light prophets and priests, but eventually along with their sinful request, they got the solemn judgment of God. And sad to say, this rejection of God's message started with the politicians and those in authority.

Now, let's take a look at this tremendous chapter from the Book of Jeremiah and pay attention to what Jeremiah is trying to get the people to understand so that they might be able to escape the impending judgment of God.

A. Notice the content of Jeremiah's warning to the politicians. vs. 1-2

1. First, this content included destructive behavior. v. 1a

In the first part of verse 1, we read the words, **"Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord."** At first glance it would seem to us in this modern generation that God's first message was to the pastors of the churches, but the word used pastor here means shepherd of the sheep. It is not talking about bad church pastors who scatter the sheep, but of course, this might just be applicable. But the word pastor or shepherd actually is referring to those who are in charge of the government with the responsibility of providing protection for the people. So, we might for surely say that the message was for the politicians who were failing in their responsibility to watch over their sheep, but instead were contributing to the flock being scattered and in much danger. These politicians were guilty of destroying the welfare of the people because of their rebellion against God's Word and His will for the people and for their country as a whole. Therefore, Jeremiah sternly rebuked them for their destructive behavior. This was not

something Jeremiah wanted to do, but it was something he had to do because while he was still in his mother's womb, God called this eventually humble servant and planned to use him mightily. God needed someone who would step to the forefront in spite of his timidity and be full of God's Spirit to warn the leaders of their destructive behavior and the consequences of their sin which they would soon see. God needed a bold servant, and in Jeremiah He surely found one!

2. Secondly, the content included divisive behavior. v. 1b

In the last part of verse one, we are told that these so-called pastors or shepherds were scattering their sheep because of their lack of genuine care and because of their selfishness which led the sheep into the wilderness of sin and debauchery. These wicked politicians wanted a life of pleasure and indulgence instead of abiding by the Word of God and what Jeremiah the prophet had to say. Later in this study we will learn that these leaders insisted on light or easy preaching which made false promises to the people instead of truth from God Almighty. They were living lives of hypocrisy while dividing or scattering the people. Ladies and gentlemen, when we take the absolute truth of God's Word out of our culture and society, the end result is total anarchy and ultimate disaster.

Now let me say that I am very much afraid that right now in America, our country is being led basically by the same kind of phonies that were ruling in Jerusalem and Judah. All we hear are the lies and false promises of wicked men and women who lead this country rapidly down hill to an ultimate disaster. As I heard Dr. Ed Young, Sr. say recently, "when we destroy the foundation stones of culture upon which our country was formed, our defenses are down and in comes the enemies." Dr. Young, Sr. is the pastor of Second Baptist Church, Houston, Texas, and one of the finest Jeremiahs left here in this country. And I will add that right now our walls are down and we are being overrun by illegal aliens, corrupt Muslim people, Hindus, Buddhists, and scores of other false religions while we as God's people get criticized and run down for our strong stand against evil perversions, false religions, and damnable easy believism coming out of our pulpits! In the eyes of so many politicians, the bad guys have become the good guys, and the good guys have become the bad guys. It would seem to me that something is vastly twisted and distorted.

Over the past seven plus years here in America, we have had a confused president who calls good evil and evil good, and he has taken so many stands against true Christianity while he even professes to be a Christian. Yet, his leadership has divided this country more so than I can remember happening to any president in my entire life time. So right now, our country is in the same condition that the Southern Kingdom was in the days of Jeremiah. What's left, but either repentance or impending judgment!

3. Thirdly, this content included dangerous behavior. v. 2a

In the first part of verse 2, we are told that God spoke through Jeremiah and told the leaders the following; "**Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away.**" What God is saying in this text is that corrupt hypocritical leaders focus on themselves and their pleasure while failing to feed and protect their sheep. Thus, the sheep are driven out into dangerous areas to find food and to fend for themselves. Because of this, the sheep are put into danger while the so-called shepherds or pastors only take care of themselves.

Folks, this verse so reminds me of politicians here in America who run for office, get elected by the support of the sheep in their districts, counties, and states, and then go to Washington or some other capitol city and try to make it a lifetime political position whatever way they can, but they just lose touch with their constituency and others they claim to represent. Just think about the scores of politicians who make false promises to their people but never get around to fulfilling them. They forget the sheep who put them in office and go on their merry way trying to build their political and financial empire. According to Jeremiah, this was what was happening in the Southern Kingdom and in Jerusalem.

If you don't believe what I am telling you as I try to exegete this scary passage, just stop and take a look at how long many of our politicians have been in office and how they have lost contact with the people they profess to represent. Right now here in America, we have a president who has done this, plus the Senate Majority Leader, our most recent former Speaker of the House of Representatives, plus scores of both Democratic and Republican politicians that have sold their people down the river figuratively speaking just for fame, fortune, and power. I just wonder how much judgment is coming for these

professing shepherds who have put their sheep in danger? If God almighty brought judgment on the people of His chosen nation just after Jeremiah warned them, how much sorer punishment is awaiting our wicked nation when we have been given so many blessings and opportunities.

4. Fourthly, this content included derelict behavior. v. 2b

Webster's Dictionary defines the word dereliction as willful or intentional abandonment of responsibility which usually results in someone getting hurt or being unprotected. In the second part of verse two, this is truly what happened in Israel. The ruling politicians were intentionally neglecting their people because of their self-centered worldliness and pride. They no longer cared anything about the people, and they would not listen to Jeremiah the prophet who preached God's Word to hold them accountable and warn them of the coming judgment because of their dereliction of duty. They were professing shepherds, but they didn't even visit with the sheep in order to see what the sheep needed.

I will again say that this kind of rotten attitude is the same that we see everyday here in our American political system, as well as in other countries of the world where power crazy people rule with almost no concern for the welfare of the people unless another election is coming. We elect leaders who promise the world, but then don't even attempt to carry out any thing they promise unless the deed may gain the support of more people for the next election. But let me remind all of us that this kind of ungodly attitude and behavior is the reason that the Southern Kingdom was brought to ashes and most of the people carried away to Babylon just following Jeremiah's warning. Just as these crooked politicians and leaders in Jeremiah's day didn't want to hear the truth from God about their overt wickedness, the same still holds true today. The people today still don't want any confrontational message convicting them of their sins, but they hungrily desire the light preachers with the warm and fuzzy messages so that they can hear, feel good about themselves, and then go home from church with no guilt of their sins.

Let me stop here for a moment and give a good illustration of these kind of people that Jeremiah was preaching to. Not very long ago here in our new Gateway International Baptist Church, we had a lady that started attending our worship

services and Bible studies regularly. She seemed to be a very sweet lady and she showed a strong hunger for the Word of God, and she just seemed to want more and more of the truth. She also had a pretty strong testimony about how God saved her from a horrible past which had produced much sin, broken homes, defiant and evil children, and even some illegal behavior in some of her children. Because of our love for her, our church family reached out to her and tried to minister to her in many ways. Our hearts were so broken for her because she had been through so much. And truthfully folks, she really seemed to appreciate what we did and because of her sweet spirit and seeming appreciation, we wanted to do even more for her.

Then along comes the devil through her family and begins to criticize her for coming to our white church because she is African American. They ran her down and made many accusations toward her because of their racism. Before very long she walked away from our church where she had told me that she was growing more than she ever had before in her entire Christian life. Then, after being gone for a few weeks, I was able to talk with her. Her excuse for not coming was that she wasn't getting what she needed. I said, "what more do you want when you told me how much you were growing?" She said I need praise and worship!" Well folks, the truth of the matter was and is that she was living a lie as a church hypocrite while eating up the love that we were showing, but when we started encouraging her to join our church and take some responsibility, her hypocrisy raised its head through the racial prejudice of her family because they didn't want her sitting under strong confrontational preaching like Jeremiah, especially from a white man. They put her on a guilt trip and because she was not genuine like she pretended, she is now gone away to a warm and fuzzy church with loud music and dancing where the pastor is a lady who doesn't know the difference in being religious and getting genuinely saved. This speaks to me of the same type of hypocrisy that Jeremiah faced before the judgment of God fell on the nation of Israel. My question is, "When will the foolish religious pretenders wake up in this land?" The judgment of God is coming and people go merrily on their way just pretending that it will never happen. So, what we need are those easy light preachers who say every thing is positive, no impending judgment coming, everything is cool in their churches, and if you go to their churches, you will get a spiritual therapy session, but never fall under conviction.

B. Notice the consequences of this warning to the politicians. vs. 3-4

It is truly wonderful to know that even when God promises judgment, because of His love for humanity, He always promises a ray of hope to at least a remnant of His people if they will repent and return to Him. This is what we find in verses three and four of our study. God says to Israel through Jeremiah the prophet that if they will go away to Babylon and make the best of their terrible situation that one day after seventy years He will bring a remnant of His people back to Israel and their nation will be reestablished once again. Of course, looking far ahead, we know that this is what happened because God never breaks a promise. The false prophets had scores of their promises to fall flat, but God never forgets the promises He makes to His people.

It is so wonderful to know that when God brings bad news to His people, that He always gives a promise of hope and redemption if His people will repent and turn to Him. This is what we find in the consequences of the warning that Jeremiah gave to Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom. Let's take a look at these positive promises given to God's people in Jeremiah's day, and then remember that there is always a hope for a remnant if the people will repent of their sins and change their ways to God's ways.

1. The consequences include the promise of eventual restoration for a remnant. v. 3

a. God tells the people through the prophet that the remnant will be restored to their folds. (Homes) v. 3a

The first part of verse three is a tremendous promise. God promised to Israel that if they would repent of their ways in Babylonian captivity and live with respect and dignity before God in a strange land, then the time would come when He would bring some of them and their children back to their folds or homes. This was indeed a great promise of hope, but I am sure that during those seventy years of captivity they thought about giving up many times, but God's promise of a restored remnant had to offer them hope even in a foreign land when it seemed that all hope was gone.

Folks, it is my utmost prayer that God will never allow a Muslim, communistic, or any secular or humanistic country take over our land, but if He does, and it

could very well happen, let's pray that He might see fit to rescue a remnant of His people and reestablish our country. But, in my almost 60 years of studying the Bible, I have never seen any where America is mentioned in the Bible after the rapture of the church and the Great Tribulation. Therefore, can I beg all of us to turn back to God so as to just spare our beautiful America just a little while longer. We all know that there is just no place like home, especially our homes here in our country. But, we must learn from Israel, God's chosen nation, that if we forsake Him and His Word, the only hope we can have is a restored remnant.

- b. God tells the people through the prophet that the remnant will be restored to their fruitfulness. v. 3b

I don't know about you the reader, but I have to confess that I am a workaholic. I know that this might be the reason I now have so many health problems at my age, but truthfully, if I ever have to go to bed at night feeling that my life that day has not been fruitful or productive, I feel like a failure. Yet, just try to imagine seeing all of your years of labor and productiveness fall before your very eyes as the mighty army of Babylon comes into your city and destroys everything you have always worked for. The buildings are razed and the crops are destroyed, and all around you, you see the bodies and smell the stench of dead neighbors and friends who have been murdered. All hope is now gone for you and the entire country, caused primarily because of the terrible politicians who have let everything get out of hand in the land because of their sinfulness. It would seem that all of your future fruitfulness and productivity is now over.

In steps the prophet, Jeremiah, and begins to tell you and all of God's people that God's judgment is sure, but eventually a remnant will be restored and the people will be restored to a life of fruitfulness and productivity. What a message of hope this must have brought to the people in Jeremiah's day. Although many of the people of Israel would not live long enough in captivity to return to the land, at least their children would and so hope still reigned instead of total despair.

- c. God tells the people through the prophet that the remnant will be restored to their food. v. 4a

The phrase in the first part of verse four is a little hard to really understand because it is talking about new shepherds or politicians that would one day feed the sheep that had been neglected by the original shepherds that brought the judgment of God upon Judah. I believe that the clearest meaning is that the former shepherds or country leaders that had neglected the people before captivity because of their selfish desires would now be replaced by new caring leaders who would take care of the scattered sheep and feed them with good food once the new remnant returned from captivity. This means that there was a promise from God through Jeremiah the prophet that a better day was coming for the remnant and they should not lose complete hope, even with the judgment of being torn from their homeland and placed in a foreign country as slaves.

Let me interject something here. When I was living at home many years ago, I had a mother that could cook beyond belief. She had grown up in a family of twelve children, and because she was a middle child, the older children were sent to work in the fields, while the younger children were left at home to be taken care of by their older siblings. Because of this, my mom was one of the family cooks every day. Therefore, she became one of the greatest cooks that ever lived. I can still remember the huge biscuits that she made, the delicious fried chicken with gravy, and all of the wonderful delicious desserts that she prepared; especially the peach and strawberry cobblers. I believe if I could, I would still literally eat my weight in these deliteful treats. Of course, that too may have contributed to my health problems such as diabetes. But the truth is that when my mom died back in January of 1969, I felt we would never eat that good again. But, after a few years of practice as a young wife and mother, my dear wife has come very close to duplicating my mom's cooking. So, I am thrilled to be back in the land again eating the wonderful food that God has provided to these two choice ladies in my life. I sincerely feel that throughout all the time the Israelites were away in captivity that they lived and longed for the day when

they would once again eat the good food in their land under some new shepherds who would adequately provide for them. I believe this may have been one of the prominent thoughts in their minds which provided them hope until the remnant was given permission under Cyrus the Persian King to return home.

Let me say again that right now, America is in such a mess politically, morally, and judicially as I stated earlier in this booklet. We have lost the true statesmen or shepherds who have led by the truth of the Book of God and instead have placed the leadership of our nation in the hands of liberal politicians who are perverted morally, power crazy, and either defiant against God and truth or are just simply indifferent to the truth and tolerant of every belief and practice coming down the pike. Therefore as I have stated before, "in the minds of many, it is more evil for those of us who criticize and condemn evil than it is for those who actually commit the horrible sins such as adultery, robbery, homosexuality, lesbianism, transgender tolerance and practice, and even murder. If you don't believe what I am saying here, then just stop and watch the news for a few days and see how our media and sad to say, even our judiciary, has more passion and feeling for the criminals than they do for the victims of the crime.

So, I will conclude this point by saying that we not only need new shepherds or politicians who stay connected to their people and provide for the sheep, but we need some leaders who will once again promote the feeding of God's Word to our people in the schools, colleges, and yes, even in our prisons where a lot of state and federal regulations have taken this privilege away. All that I can say is that when men or women leaders vote for and embrace the removal of God's Word, they invite the eventual judgment of God upon our nation and its people. Just how foolish and even stupid can educated people become?

- d. God tells the people through the prophet that the remnant will be restored to their fearlessness. v. 4b

Bible scholars debate the length of Jeremiah's ministry preaching to this sinful nation, but it would seem that he probably preached between 40 and 50 years before he was taken down to Egypt where it is believed that he was stoned to death. Can you just imagine the fear that must have gripped the hearts of many of the people in spite of the fact that they never returned back to God before this horrible captivity? And, just think how fearful the people must have been when the Babylonians began their three attacks against Jerusalem leading up to the complete fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. while Zedekiah was the puppet king. When I think of this historical tragedy, I think I can best relate to what might have happened by remembering some of the awful stories I was told about the butchery and cruelty during the Rwanda genocide back in 1994. I have heard some of the most horrible stories that a person could ever be told, and I safely conclude that it must have been similar when Babylon came in to destroy Jerusalem and Judah. The fear of the people had to be indescribable.

But when we read the second part of verse four, we soon learn that one day a remnant of the Israelites would return to Jerusalem and when that would happen, there would no longer be immense fear and anxiety. Instead, the nation would live in peace and the remnant would worship and fear God again. Now I believe that this verse was initially fulfilled when the Jews came home from Babylonia Captivity, fulfilled more when it became a state again in the month of May, 1948, and yet it will be fulfilled eternally when Jesus Christ returns to establish His earthly Kingdom during the millennial reign of Christ following the rapture of the church, the rule of the Antichrist, and the Great Tribulation period. This should give to all of us as saved Jews and Gentiles the blessed hope of peace and fearlessness because God never breaks His promises.

- e. God tells the remnant through the prophet that the remnant will be restored to their fullness. v. 4c

So that you will get the complete impact of verse four, let me share it with you again. Please don't miss what God is trying to share with all of us through this text.

Please pay attention. **"And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord."** Do you notice the phrase, **"neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord?"** Folks, this means that the remnant would one day be back in their own land living with every need met by God Himself who would be the God of provision for His people. And, I believe that this verse is also saying that when the remnant returned, the people would live lives of fulfillment. They would be happy and productive again as I mentioned earlier. What a tremendous promise this was from God to His people through the weeping prophet!

Before moving on, I want to mention something that has been on my heart for over 50 years as a Senior Pastor. It has been my observation down through these years that most of the church members that I have ever pastored are seemingly some of the most unhappy people I have ever met. I used to wonder what I as a pastor had done to cause this unhappiness, and yes, also what could I do to make them happy again. There is one thing I learned experientially. It is truly impossible to make unfulfilled people happy. Thus, no human being will ever reach fulfillment until he or she discovers his or her spiritual gifts and then use them in a ministry to others. I believe this is the way God has made us, and when selfish egotistical people who are full of pride spend their entire lives trying to satisfy themselves, they **will never find fulfillment!** In fact, it is a waste of time to even try to find fulfillment apart from a ministry to other people. So, God told Israel that they were to be at peace, live well in their bad environment while in captivity, plant gardens, marry their children to one another, and then to encourage the kids to reproduce more kids before a remnant would be allowed to go home and once more find fulfillment. The simple truth of the matter is this, fulfillment can only come when a saved spiritual person lives faithfully for Jesus and then finds God's will for his or her life, and then walk in that will of God the rest of their lives. My friend, are you presently living a life of fulfillment? If you aren't, let me know and I will do my best to help you find that fulfillment.

2. The consequences included the promise of eternal salvation. vs. 5-6

I want us to now take a look at verses five and six and see something rather unique in the study of God's Word. Right in the midst of Jeremiah's discussion of the children of Israel being promised to return from captivity and restored to their land, God inserts a prophecy about the coming Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, who would be an offshoot of the tribe of David. He calls the future coming Messiah the righteous Branch of David and promises He would become King and rule with righteousness and execute judgment and justice on the earth. In verse six, the Jews are promised to be saved from captivity, and then dwell safely in the land again. Then, there is the promise that this Branch of David would be called "The Lord our righteousness", and this was pointing to the fact that the Messiah would be the eternal Savior of everyone that would believe in Him. In other words, this promised Branch would be the only Savior whereby all men could be saved.

a. This salvation was to be in a ruling Person. v. 5

In this verse, as I stated, the King that was promised to one day fulfill the promises God made to Israel through Jeremiah would be the King ruling the entire earth. And, when that time comes, He will rule with integrity and with righteousness, not like the phony politicians that had brought the people of Judah to the point of God's catastrophic judgment. They were completely liars and hypocrites and were wicked to the core. **And we must not forget that the strongest words of rebuke and condemnation that Jesus ever spoke were directed to the phony Pharisees who pretended to be righteous while living in blatant and arrogant sin!** Listen to the following words of Jesus. **Matthew 23:13-15, "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."**

Another passage that shows Jesus' utmost contempt and hatred for hypocrisy is found a few verses after the verses I have already given you from Matthew 23. Let these words of Jesus pierce your hearts the way they obviously pierced the hearts of the phonies in His day. **Matthew 23:25-27, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."** Now beloved friends, do you see how much Jesus hates hypocrisy? I think you should see it, and no wonder that God didn't tolerate the terrible hypocritical pretension of the nation of Israel during the days of Jeremiah. Then folks, why should we believe that He will go on and on tolerating it in our land in this generation? May I say, we must repent or get ready for cataclysmic judgment. So friends, we must know, even here in America that the wicked people ruling now will not be there very much longer because Jesus the Messiah is coming again to rule over the earth! Are you ready to meet Him?

b. This salvation was to be in a righteous Person. v. 6

As I stated in the introduction to this point, verse six is just an expansion of the promise made in verse five about the coming return of the Jews to their homeland and then living under the reign of the Messiah. This promise was a true one which ever Jew could believe and look forward to, and every Gentile could long for when Jesus Christ the Messiah will reign during the millennial reign after the Great Tribulation. And when King Jesus does reign, He will rule with righteousness and complete justice on the earth. When that day comes there will be no more lying hypocritical politicians who deceive the people and bring about the judgment of God. Therefore, it would behoove every human to put his or her faith in Christ and get saved now so that they will be a part of the millennial reign when Christ comes a second time. Jesus alone is our only way to salvation.

3. The consequences included the promise of an enlightened declaration. vs. 7-8

Verses seven and eight are two wonderful verses for both the nation of Israel and for us in the church age as well. Both of these verses promise that Israel would have a new testimony when they returned to their homeland from the scattering of captivity. This testimony would no longer be what God did for them when He brought Israel from Egyptian bondage, but it would then be how God had restored them from the bondage of Babylon captivity.

a. This declaraton was to include a nullification of their past history. v. 7

One of the basic tendencies of human beings is to always reflect on the victories of past history and tell the story to one generation after another. This happened over and over again as Israel remembered their redemption from Egypt. It was a great testimony about how God had graciously delivered them from Pharoah. But as we go through one battle after another, we need to change our testimony from what God has done in the past and begin to emphasize what God has been doing for us recently. It would surely seem to me that telling the story of what God has done for us recently is far better than reliving the old testimonies of the past workings of God. And folks, let me tell you that if the only testimony you ever share with others is what God did for you at the moment of salvation many years ago, it could very well reveal that you don't have an intimate growing relationship with Him presently.

b. This declaration was to include a new narration about their homeland. v. 8

This verse tells us that one day in the future when God returned the restored remnant back to their land in Israel, there would be an on going celebration about how good it was for them to be back in their homeland after the many years of captivity. No doubt this celebration took place initially when the Jews returned from Babylon, but it also took place in a greater way when God returned the people of Israel who had

been scattered over all the earth back to the land years later in May, 1948, when Israel became an official nation once more. Bear in mind that when this occurred, it had been over 2,400 years since Israel was taken in the Babylonian captivity 800 miles east to Babylon. After the three groups of people were allowed to return to Jerusalem and the land of Israel, they were blessed by God for a long time. But, once more they rebelled against God and they were scattered again by wicked men who murdered them, held them captive for years and years, and then, even six million of them were killed by Adolph Hitler in the Holocaust. The Jewish people were hated people, and sad to say, still are by scores and scores of anti-semitic racists. Yet, we know that the Jews are in their homeland to stay, and according to the Bible, they will be there forever. This was a covenant promise that God made to Abraham and recorded in **Genesis 13:15**, **Genesis 17:8**, and in **Genesis 48:3-4**. Folks, God is not through with His nation of Israel regardless of what the Palestinian Authority says, and regardless of what our confused president says or does to snub Benjamin Netanyahu.

Ladies and gentlemen, when the people of Israel celebrate being in their homeland, this is just the fulfillment of God's promise to His chosen nation. Therefore, they should rejoice, not that they were redeemed from Egypt, but that God has brought them home to stay.

And further more, we as God's children should also rejoice because Israel is back in their homeland because it points to the imminent return of our Savior. But, we should also be rejoicing about the homeland where we are going home to live just as soon as we depart this life or when Jesus returns in the rapture. So, let's give a new testimony about not only how God saved us, but also to show our excitement about where we will spend eternity. And beloved friends, no corrupt politicians, no evil president, and no lying preachers can ever take our upcoming homeland away from us. So, let's rejoice with Israel because He never breaks a promise to His children.

II. NOTICE JEREMIAH'S COMPASSIONATE WARNING TO THE PREACHERS. vs. 9-15

We now come to the second point of our message on confronting the hypocrisy in our culture where we will study in depth what God's man, Jeremiah, preached to the preachers. This sounds ironic, doesn't it? Preach to the preachers! Yes, may I say emphatically! I would consider the prophets and the priests in Jeremiah's day the main problem because they were preaching what the people wanted to hear, and they were prophesying lies and making false promises to the people. They swore that their messages were coming from God, but Jeremiah told them that God had nothing to do with their messages. Thus, they were just trying to be religious politicians working along side of, and supporting the corruption of the secular politicians who were inviting the judgment of God upon the nation. These corrupt preachers probably could draw the crowds, make everyone happy, and then send the people home into imminent danger because they were all hypocrites.

These so-called servants of God were charlatans who were leading their people literally into God's judgment and on to hell. My friends, this is what is happening all over America today, and yes, in other countries as well. In spite of the fact that multitudes have become followers of the false preachers, even gathering in huge numbers to hear these false preachers, nothing changes the fact that certain judgment is coming for these false preachers and their followers. Let me say that we desperately need some Jeremiahs with broken hearts who will confront these hypocritical preachers with compassion, but yet declare the truth quickly before our American nation is destroyed, and even other countries as well. It is truly my prayer that maybe through this verse by verse exegesis of this text that some Jeremiahs might rise to the top and say, we will be God's vessels to challenge the evil in our lands before our countries are gone.

Now, let's take a verse by verse look at more of our text and glean what God is trying to show us so that we might be part of the solution to the problem rather than a part of the problem. Please pay close attention to our study because just maybe God will speak to your heart about becoming a modern-day Jeremiah.

A. Notice the causes of this compassionate warning. v. 9

As we move on in this study, please read careful verse nine to see what really caused Jeremiah to move on with his tough love preaching of the truth to the politicians and the people. Just remember that Jeremiah's compassion did not water down his message.

1. It was caused because of a broken heart. v. 9a

As we read the first part of this verse, it is no wonder that Jeremiah was called the weeping prophet. His heart was broken because of the phony prophets and priests who would not declare the truth to the politicians and the people. I believe

that Jeremiah was truly shedding tears as he wrote this passage of scripture. Obviously, he was a man of God with a compassionate broken heart whose compassion led to a burning passion to preach the truth to the nation. He was so burdened about the coming judgment and demise of his homeland that he just couldn't control himself when he contemplated so great a need and the seriousness of the situation. I believe at this moment that Jeremiah was in the same state of mind that Nehemiah would be in years later when no one would accept the challenge to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls around the city. The Bible tells us in chapter one of Nehemiah that Nehemiah wept for days over the challenge that was before him. But also like Nehemiah would do later, Jeremiah accepted the challenge and moved to the forefront and became God's man to get the job done. These two stories ended differently, but as I write this, I just stopped to realize that if the wicked politicians, the hypocritical preachers and the evil people would have obeyed the message of Jeremiah, there would never have been the need for Nehemiah because Israel would never have gone into Babylonian captivity.

So as I think about Jeremiah's broken heart, the question comes to my mind; "where are the broken hearted preachers in this generation that will rise up and preach the truth, even at the cost of being ultimately rejected and possibly even killed?" Are there any men of God that will point their fingers into the faces of lying politicians who scatter and divide the people? Are there any men who will stand up to these easy mambly-pambly preachers who preach the health and wealth false gospel just to make money and build their personal kingdoms? Will any of God's servants come to the front and denounce those charlatans who promise false healings and perfect success in life while wearing \$1,000 suits everytime they walk into their phony churches? Is there one genuine man of God who will walk through the door of opportunity and denounce the false preachers who promote false speaking in tongues as a prayer language just to advance their cause and convince their deceived followers that they are super-spiritual? My heart is broken over what is happening, and I want to cry out, "**GOD SEND US THESE SERVANTS BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!**" I am an old preacher who loves Jesus with all of my heart and I have a broken heart over the solemn need in our land, but folks, if God will give me the strength, I will be one who cries out against the wickedness that is bringing our country down to

the impending judgment of almighty God! I want to be another Dietrich Bonhoeffer who cried out against the wicked lies of Adolph Hitler! I may be killed as he was, but just maybe I can do something to help in this desperate hour of need just before judgment comes to America, and even other countries as well. Yes, I believe Jesus is soon coming again, and the rapture of the church may be imminent, but may we not quit or give up our land without a fight for the sake of our children, grandchildren, and our people, if Jesus tarries His coming just a little longer!

2. It was caused because of a befuddled head. v. 9b

In the second part of this verse, Jeremiah let's us in on just what a state of turmoil he was in as he pondered the need for crying out against the leaders and preachers of his dying nation. Jeremiah tells us that he is so shaken by the horrible condition of his homeland and its rebellion against God, that he shakes like a drunken man with a befuddled or confused mind because he can't believe what the lying preachers in his country have done to openly contribute to the downfall of the nation. He is in a state of complete consternation over how the leaders have turned their backs upon God Almighty Who has blessed the land so liberally with blessing after blessing. Jeremiah just can't believe what is happening before his very eyes.

Folks, as I write this on a beautiful Spring day, I must tell you that I have been crying right here in my study over the conditions in America which was founded and built upon the truth of God's blessed Word, but now has tried so hard to remove God and His Word from our culture. I am truly embarrassed at what is going on, and especially by the corrupt self-seeking preachers who are declaring lies to build their kingdoms rather than the Kingdom of God. I might just as well confess that like Jeremiah, my head is befuddled and I am confused because I see things happening that a few years ago I would have thought could never happen in this God-fearing country. When I listen to some preachers on TV, I get completely sick on my stomach at the false promises, the twisted messages, and the changing of the truth of God's Word to accommodate the sins of the people

Where did we ever get the idea that we could change God's Word to accept and promote wicked homosexuality, lesbianism, transgender behavior, continual sexual immorality

such as adultery, living together unmarried with no fear of God, and in so many other vicious sexual sins? And beyond this, how utterly foolish for us to believe that we could allow the abortion of almost 60 million unborn babies since 1973 without receiving the judgment of God for this genocide? I would to God to hear a politician in one of our state capitols or in Washington, DC, pass a law stating that this murder of these precious little babies is a genocide greater than in all of human history! I would love to hear a national preacher say that America is on the verge of total destruction unless we repent of of this bloodbath and stop this wholesale destruction of children which the professing Christians in our land have tolerated with their silence.

3. It was caused by a bypassed holiness. v. 9c

Why was Jeremiah's heart broken and his mind in a state of confusion over the situation in Jerusalem? I am sure that we could ascertain that there were many reasons, but I believe that the main reason was because of the lack of holiness and holy living by the people who professed to be God's children. And because this was indeed true, Jeremiah laid most of the blame at the feet of phony prophets and priests who were preaching lies and living hypocritically themselves just to make the politicians and people comfortable while living in out right sin and debauchery. Because Jeremiah was God's man, it was an offense to him that the people who had been blessed so much by God, were now living as if they would never have to answer to Holy God.

Please notice the last part of verse nine where we are told that the wicked sins of the preachers and the people were a true offense to the Word of a Holy God and to the integrity of the God they professed to serve. In other words, folks, these Israelites said they believed in God and that He was their father, but they didn't want to obey any of His laws and regulations to maintain His standard of holiness. They just simply had determined that they would live their lives any way they chose, and they would do this without fear of Godly accountability because they convinced the preachers in their day to change their messages to just love and kindness. Therefore, they could go on living in sin and feeling no guilt whatsoever. In other words, they would go to the temple to worship and come home with that warm fuzzy feeling, and yet never see the need for repentance.

May I tell you that the above couple of paragraphs are just like reading the daily newspapers and watching the religious news here in America. Never in my 50 plus years in the ministry have I seen such a religious mess in our churches, pulpits, special religious meetings, and even in what used to be conservative denominations. There is just rarely today any holiness in the way people dress at church, and even worse in their daily lives. And, the music and atmosphere in the churches have become like a rock festival with psychedelic lights, extremely loud music, sexual gyrations with their guitars and other instruments, and regardless of how these modern pastors and worship leaders profess to be worshipping a holy God, there is nothing sacred or holy about it. Just like Jeremiah when he trembled over the conditions of Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom, I too tremble today with fear and uncertain anxiety because of the false preachers and church leaders who are making their congregations two-fold children of hell because of their phony and deceptive religious conduct and practice.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is no wonder that America and some other countries stand on the brink of God's divine judgment just simply because of the defiant rebellion we are witnessing right before our very eyes. And, instead of crying out about these matters, our preachers, our church leaders, and our politicians are condemning those of us who believe and feel the way I do, and the way Jeremiah did. They would love for our kind of preachers and prophets to be put in prison like Jeremiah was, and they will do anything to silence us. They would rather that we be killed and silenced than to have to give up their sin and repent of their evil ways. But may I remind you that everything that Jeremiah predicted about judgment coming to Israel happened, and I sense it is coming to America if we don't repent and turn back to God. As I stated earlier, why should we believe that God will hold His hand of judgment if He never held it from Israel, His chosen nation.

B. Notice the confrontation in this compassionate warning. vs. 10-14

In these next few verses we are going to look at the strong, but yet compassionate warning that Jeremiah gave to the professing preachers and prophets in that day when evil was reigning in Jerusalem. I would ask you to please notice carefully the similarity in Israel in Jeremiah's day to our present society and culture here in America. It is so close to what we are witnessing before our very eyes,

that it seems like we have just duplicated the conditions in which Jeremiah lived which brought cataclysmic judgment.

1. There was the confrontation of sexual perversion. v. 10a

The first part of this verse tells us that Israel was full of adultery. It would seem that they had even begun to paganize their religious worship to include sexual sin as was the case in the worship of Baal and Molech which Jeremiah later mentions in his book. In other words, the people had reached a point where all they lived for was to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh as if it were their only reason for living. Of course with this attitude, they were not fearful of God holding them accountable for their wickedness, and thus, there was no evidence of regret or repentance. They just simply lived to satisfy the flesh, and they would go to whatever extent they wanted to in order to get this satisfaction, regardless of what God thought or what Jeremiah preached. They were just hell-bent on satisfying the lust of the flesh.

When I study this verse, I can't help but think about the sins of sexual perversion which Paul found when he came to Corinth in the Book of Acts. The place was wholly given to perversion of every kind, and the people felt no shame at all about what they were doing. The Corinthians were truly pagans living in total idolatry, and their god was satisfying their lusts. And so it was in Judah when Jeremiah came to warn them. Their physical lust had turned into pagan idolatry until that was their main reason for living, as I stated earlier. So, not only were they committing physical adultery, but they were committing spiritual adultery by going whoring after other gods. They just simply decided that if their Jewish religion would not allow them to live any way they wanted, they would just disregard that one and find one like Baalism that would allow them to commit any perversion they wanted to commit. Is this not a picture of modern America? If the politicians, the preachers, and the people don't like the restrictions of God's laws, then they will just chunk them and get themselves a watered down version which will allow them to live any way they desire and commit any sin they choose and never feel conviction over it or see the need for any repentance. And if their preachers happen to accidentally mention their sins, then they will leave their church and go find a smiley preacher like Joel Osteen, who will never make them feel guilty and also never offer them

the only way to be forgiven as well. This is truly America and many other countries as well today.

2. There was the confrontation of sinful perjury. v. 10b

There are 52 chapters in the Book of Jeremiah. As I have read through these chapters many times, there is one thing I know; Jeremiah had a terrible disdain for liars. And what is more sure, he detested those who swore or cursed while telling lies. In this second part of verse 10, I have called this lying sinful perjury because there is much evidence that there was so much swearing and lying with wicked cursing that the whole land was mourning and weeping because of this wickedness. The people had become so vile and profane that the common Jewish citizen was offended and ashamed because of this brutal behavior. And believe it or not, this problem was made worse because their preachers did not cry out against it. So this sinful perjury was and still is an abomination to almighty God.

Right now in America there are preliminary elections going on for two people to be chosen to run against one another in the Fall for the position of President of the United States. I have watched these preliminary primary elections until I have been made sick on my stomach. I can never remember such lying as I am watching every day on television. One of the candidates running is Hillary Clinton, and folks in all my life, I have never witnessed such a liar speaking anywhere in the world like Hillary Clinton. She lies about everything, and yet, she is seeking to be our next president. May God forbid that this ever happens. Also, what do you think about a man named Donald Trump who defiantly tells us that he is a Christian, and then stating that he has never had to repent in his entire life of anything? Would you say he is lying? I would say emphatically that he is a liar. Yet, he pushes other candidates around calling them liars while he is one of the biggest liars to ever walk on the earth. And folks, to make this so much more awful, some of the most known preachers in America have endorsed this liar. They are Jerry Fallwell, Jr. in Lynchburg, VA, Robert Jeffries in Dallas, Texas, and several other well-known preachers. So, we don't have any choices but to vote for the lesser of two evils, and then watch our country burn under the judgment of God because we make liars our leaders. May God help by sending us some men and women of integrity to lead our country. If our leaders are liars, then they can't be trusted.

Before moving on to the next point, I just want to add that things in our land or any country will never get better until lying preachers quit brainwashing the people with false promises, false doctrine, and false or counterfeit religions. These false religions come in many forms today just as they did in the days of Jeremiah. Let me just mention a few of the false religions that are doing so much damage to the entire world, and harming the true believing Christians.

First, I will mention far out radical Pentecostalism that constantly finds a demon behind every bush, and pushes the people to believe phony promises of every nature. Secondly, there is the false doctrine of hyper-Calvinism which teaches a limited number of people can be saved, and that the Gospel is not for everyone. This false religion also teaches that because only the elect can be saved, they will be saved regardless, whether they want to or not! This is totally absurd and utterly ridiculous. The Bible says, "that whosoever will may come."

Another false doctrine today is the Mormonism cult. This is one of the most damnable religions on the entire planet. And, it is deceiving millions of people with its doctrine that there is no hell, but only three heavens. And, they teach that you can go to one of these three heavens by becoming more enlightened by your own efforts and then you will become like an angel or a little god. They also teach that if you had a loved one or friend that died who was not a Mormon, then a true Mormon can be baptized here on the earth for the person who is dead, and by this proxy baptism, that dead person will be placed in one of the three heavens. This of course is one of the major false religions in the world today, and with these destructive doctrines, millions are being led down to hell.

Then, one of the cruelest false religions today is the Jehovah's Witnesses cult. This has to be one of the most ridiculous cults to ever be bred in the fires of hell. The JW's were started by Charles Tazz Russell who was one of the most confused young men that ever lived. And his followers have deliberately distorted, rewritten, changed, and corrupted the Word of God. They teach that there is no hell, and they first taught that only 144,000 people could go to heaven. Of course, when their numbers got larger than the 144,000, then they had to find another place for the remainder, so they concocted the doctrine that there would be other JW's who would dwell on earth in an earthly kingdom. These Biblical perverts don't

believe in the trinity, they believe Jesus was Michael the archangel, and they believe it is rebellion against God to have a blood transfusion, pledge allegiance to the flag, and even enjoy any of the special seasons like Christmas and Easter. And I would like to add, Jehovah Witnesses are some of the meanest people on earth when it comes to dealing with others. And most of all, the JW's deny that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh, incarnate Deity, and thus this is totally antichrist according to the Book of First John. Pay attention to the following verses; **"Hereby know ye that Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."**

(I John 4:2-3) So, my beloved friends, the Bible in **II John, verses 10-11**, tells us that when someone denies the Deity of Jesus Christ, that we are not to welcome them into our homes, or even bid them God speed when they travel. In other words, to ask God's blessing upon Jehovah Witnesses, is to defiantly disobey God's Word, and to ask for the judgment of God upon yourselves and family because you are partakers of their evil deeds.

There are numbers of other false religions in our world, but I don't have time or space to write about them all. But, I will list just a few more that are consigning millions of people to hell fire because they are teaching lies and corrupting the precious Word of God. There are the Buddhists, the Hindus, the Universalists, the Muslims, the Bahai, Roman Catholics, Seven Day Adventism, and scores of others. We must refuse to listen to these phony teachers and preachers lest we be led astray completely from the Word of God just like the people did during the days of Jeremiah. May God have mercy upon us, if we become willful victims of these develish doctrines taught by deceived and deceiving people.

3. There was the confrontation of secular pathways. v. 10c

In the third part of verse 10, we are told that the people of Israel were so misguided and misdirected that they were being judged with a terrible drought and famine because they were following the evil ways of rebellion against God which were ways where they tried to pretend they were religious, but in fact were secular power and money crazy people. And, the

preachers were enabling them to follow this crooked path because they would not preach and teach the truth to them. Therefore, Jeremiah compassionately confronts them with the truth, but the people didn't want to hear a message from God that would make them uncomfortable in their sins. So, they insisted on having light and easy preachers who would make them feel at ease, even while judgment was just on the horizon in the form of Babylon. This sounds so much like America today when our President calls the ISIS radical Islamic terrorist JV's while they get closer and closer to bringing more destruction in our own country. Denial of truth may feel good for the moment, but sooner or later, the truth will arrive, but maybe in the form of cataclymic judgment.

4. There was the confrontation of a sick pursuit. v. 10d

In the very last part of verse 10, we are told that the children of Israel in Jerusalem and the surrounding area were using their God-given talents and energies for the wrong purposes. The efforts were just not right! They had rebelled against a righteous and holy God who have given them their talents and energies, but because of their blatant defiance against God, they took these talents and energies and used them for their own selfish and evil purposes. And yet folks, that is what I am seeing everywhere today here in America and in other parts of the world as well. Little attention is given by our young people to seeking God's plans and purposes in His Kingdom work, but instead, these young people with so much potential, seek only to find a place where they can make good money, achieve much success, and climb the secular ladder to obtaining temporary stuff that they will all leave behind when they stand before Jesus. It is just common sense to use our talents, skills and our energies for something eternal where we can enjoy it forever, rather than to destroy our aging and dying bodies just for present pleasures and temporary riches. This was what the people were doing in Jeremiah's day, and I sincerely believe that we could say we could multiply their efforts tenfold here in America right now. How do I know this? Because hundreds of churches sit without pastors and the mission fields are begging for missionaries, and no one seems to care. The cause is the sick pursuit of the wrong things when time is so short and Jesus is soon coming again. Will you please help me to confront a lot of these misguided young people who are going down the wrong pathway to secular sick pursuits.

C. Notice the calculation in this compassionate warning. vs. 11-15

Now, we come to an amazing thing in the story of Jeremiah confronting the politicians, the preachers, and the people in his obedience to the call of God. We will see in the next few verses how Jeremiah articulated the individual sins of the prophets and priests and then calculated what was about to happen to them for their false lies and promises to the people. And, Jeremiah pronounces the strong coming judgment of God upon these hypocritical preachers because of the damage their false sermons had caused. Yes, Jeremiah had a broken heart over what was happening, but he didn't allow his sorrow to hinder him from telling the truth about the impending judgment coming to Israel. The Bible tells us to tell the truth in love, and this is very clearly what Jeremiah did. Now let's dig into these next few verses to see what Jeremiah says to those who don't want to hear it.

1. Jeremiah's calculation was about corrupt preachers. v. 11

In verse eleven we find a terrible indignant of the prophets and priests in Jerusalem. They are told by the prophet that they have profaned their office or position, and they have desecrated the very house of God where they were to preach truth and protect the sacredness of worship. I tell you folks, this was a very serious charge against the preachers; one they would never recover from. These wolves in sheep's clothing had enabled the politicians and people to go on living in sin while their country was falling apart spiritually, morally, economically, and judicially.

As I write this morning, I just wonder if there is a prophet of God in our land that will point out the hypocrites who stand in the pulpits of churches every weekend with thousands of people, and never tell their parishers the complete truth? Is there a dynamic servant of God who will confront these phonies who promise false hope, the power of positive thinking, therapeutic solutions about the people's destinies, and insight church folks to forget about their sins and rise above any conviction and condemnation that God's Word might bring? Where are the Jeremiahs today that are so needed to confront these liars who preach half-truths and not the entire Word of God? Surely there is someone who will come to the forefront and cry out against these Emergent Church leaders who only talk about contextualizing the Gospel in the modern culture so that people can get a Gospel that doesn't offend, doesn't

convict, or doesn't ostracize people in this cool generation of pop star Christians. If there is, please, please report for duty!

2. Jeremiah's calculation was about coming punishment. v. 12

Verse 12, seemingly has a simple meaning, but if we dig a little deeper, I believe we can glean some profound truth hidden in this great verse. And I must tell you that almost every commentary in my library, and there are many, avoided to exegete this verse for some reason. So, let me try my best to explain what God is saying to these crooked preachers through the prophet Jeremiah.

Under the anointing of God, Jeremiah tells the phony lying preachers that judgment is on the way, and particularly for them because of the damage they have done to the people and nation. He tells them that because of their false instructions for the people on how they should live, God is going to take them down a slippery path that will cause them to fall in the darkness they have created for others. They will experience judgment worse than the darkness they have heaped upon the people of Israel. They shall be driven or forced out of their high pretentious positions and will fall into the pits or traps they have set for others. The evil messages and lies they have preached to others will come home to haunt them in a great way. The truth was that these hypocrites would suffer far greater damage than they had brought to the people. And folks, this should be a tremendous lesson for every professing pastor or church leader. Because we have been given such a tremendous responsibility, our judgment will be greater than the people who receive our messages if the content of our messages doesn't come to pass as we have promised. Therefore, be it known by all professing wolves in sheep clothing preachers, that you will be visited by extreme judgment just because of the way you and those you have influenced to do evil used extreme negligence in not taking care of the sheep.

Jeremiah tells the preachers that their coming judgment would be so severe, that the year when this judgment arrived would be remembered for ever. It will always be remembered that in 586 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar would come into Jerusalem and finalize the destruction of the nation of Israel when Zedekiah was the puppet king. And truthfully, here I am writing about that date because it went down in history as cataclysmic.

I suppose that a good way to understand this is to remember back in our lives to a particular date when some catastrophic happened. It may have been a particular hurricane, a terrible tornado, or even the death of a leader in our land, such as the death of John F. Kennedy. These dates and these happenings are written indeliably in our minds and we will never forget them. And so it was with Jeremiah telling the phony lying preachers, ungodly hypocrites, that the coming judgment would forever be remembered by Isarel.

3. Jeremiah's calculation was about crooked posture. v. 13 (Idolatry)

This verse is a message of reflection by Jeremiah on how the profane preachers in Jerusalem had been negatively influenced by the false prophets of Baal in the Northern Kingdom of Samaria. Those wicked prophets had enlisted God's people in the North to bow before idols of stone, and submit themselves to gods that didn't even exist. And, along with the worship of these idols, there was pagan immorality and perversion beyond description. I believe we can see how far the people in the Southern Kingdom were walking away from God, because they were so easily influenced by the people in the North.

I believe this would be a good time for me to ask you, our readers, are you more easily influenced by others who pretend to be saved and following God, than you are from your pastor who walks with God and tells you the truth? Do you listen to your pastor preach the truth about living a committed righteous life in your home and family, and then walk out the door and pay more attention to your so-called friends who encourage you to keep your kids out of church on Sundays and Wednesdays in order to play sports, go camping, travel to the mountains, etc.? If this is you, then you are worshipping strange gods that will ultimately bring the judgment of God to you and your children. Friends, you won't need to ask why one day when your kids rebel against going to church, reading their Bibles, praying together, get pregnant out of wedlock, or maybe end up in prison? You will already know why! You listened to the wrong people and rejected the truth from God's Word. It will be too late then, because the damage will already have been done. I sincerely pray that you won't bow before the gods of sports, recreation, hunting, golfing, fishing, camping, motorcycle riding, traveling and a million more to the detriment and destruction of your kids.

4. Jeremiah's calculation was about certain payment. vs. 14-15

The Bible says in **Galatians 6:7, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."** As a great preacher, R. G. Lee, preached many years ago, "There is always a payday someday". This is what Jeremiah told the corrupt preachers in the land of Israel when he confronted them about their wicked lies and leadership for the children of Israel in the Southern Kingdom and in Jerusalem, the capitol. This great prophet just simply told these perverted religious leaders that the God of heaven would not be mocked, and then the people get by with it. In fact, Jeremiah told them that because of their vile sins that God was going to destroy the preachers and their people as payment for their sins. Payday had come, and there was nothing to stop it now. Judgment was soon coming and these children of God would never forget the shock and awe of it all.

- a. This payment which was coming would be destruction like Sodom and Gomorrah. v. 14

Please pay strict attention to verse 14. **"I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem a horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers; that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants of Gomorrah."** Folks, these stern words come from God almighty via the prophet Jeremiah. Now just imagine if you would if God spoke these same words to your pastor or church leaders. How would you feel if the people supposedly representing God lived in such debauchery while professing to preach the truth? Can I tell you that these were damnable words of indignant against these wicked preachers. And yet, this was not just happening in Jeremiah's day, but it is happening all over the world today. I could list for you the names of numbers of preachers who have built great churches and ministries while committing adultery and promising lies to their parishners down through the 50 years of my ministry. These wicked men preached false dreams and lies, and then enjoyed the pleasures of sexual sin and stolen money. And then, if another real man of God criticized or told the truth about these

charlatans, then the genuine man of God became the bad guy. And I must tell you that many of these wicked preachers are back in their pulpits and ministries today just like nothing happened.

God told these deceivers that they were enabling the wicked to do more evil by strengthening their hands because they didn't cry out about the people's sins and hold them accountable for their wickedness. And how could they have held the people accountable when they were living worse than many of their sheep? Therefore, God told these corrupt leaders that because they didn't preach the truth to their flocks, none of their wayward evil sheep returned to God in repentance. So, God says to the preachers, you and your sheep are so vile and wicked, that you are just as bad as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. And I believe that God was telling them, just like Sodom and Gomorrah had to be destroyed, the same judgment was coming to Israel because His mercy had run out.

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe that God's mercy has now run out for these phony preachers and church leaders in America, and even in other countries. Africa has many of these hypocritical preachers who have deceived their flocks, and God is not going to forget these characters. I just read about several of these charlatans in Kenya, Uganda, and Nigeria, who were recently arrested by their own governments because of their hypocrisy. Yet, the accountability by government people will be nothing compared to the judgment of Almighty God.

- b. This payment which was coming would be deadly like poison and bitterness. v. 15

Verse 15 is a tragic verse in this text because it promises that the pleasures for the corrupt preachers and their wicked followers is over, and now their joy and happiness will be gone forever. God said through Jeremiah that He was going to feed the people with wormwood and give them gall to drink. This wormwood was probably poisonous hemlock and the gall was probably another type of bitter herb which the people

in those days mixed with water to poison people or to alleviate pain just before someone died. Remember this was what they tried to give Jesus when He was dying on the cross. God's mercy had run out, and now He was basically declaring these false preachers' funeral eulogy. They had sinned away their day of grace, and God was tired of their rebellion and blatant defiance. So, He dramatically tells the people of His coming judgment, the form of it, and the reason for it. The reason for it was because they had profaned their houses, the house of worship, and the houses of their people. Someone said to me the other day, "God's patience with America and the American church must be running out." Therefore, I don't believe we have much time left as an American nation if the crooked politicians, the false lying preachers, and the wicked pleasure seeking people don't repent and turn back to God. May God grant us a genuine revival before the spiritual sword of Damacles falls upon our land and our children. Oh God, please forgive us for our backsliding as Jeremiah admonished the people in Judah to repent of, before time was too late.

III. NOTICE JEREMIAH'S CANDID WARNING TO THE PEOPLE. vs. 16-40

Up until this point in our study of Jeremiah, Chapter 23, we have addressed the issue of Jeremiah's candid warning to the crooked politicians and the issue of his compassionate warning to the hypocritical lying preachers. Now we are going to study the issue of Jeremiah's candid warning to the people in his day who were following the leadership of these rotten politicians and perverted preachers, and were living in open sin, idolatry and complete rebellion against holy God Who had blessed them so much. There is one statement that I have heard down through all the years of my life. That statement is, "one thing we have learned from history is that men never learn from history." This is such a true statement when it comes to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. God had been so good to Israel when He delivered them from Egyptian bondage, and yet, the people rebelled against Him and didn't trust Him to take them into the promised land. Thus, they wandered in the wilderness for the next 40 years under the judgment of God because of their sin.

Then, God gloriously took them into the promised land under the leadership of Joshua and they were to realize the fulfilled promise of God, but still, they rebelled against the love and grace of God over and over through one king after another. And then, God brought the Assyrian army into Samaria and carried away the ten Northern tribes into captivity in 722 B.C. They were warned over and over by Isaiah and other great prophets, but they just would not listen. So, here in our text we find Jeremiah telling the Southern Kingdom and Jerusalem that time was short for them

because they would not learn from the disaster in the North and repent of their sins and turn back to God. So, this great prophet, Jeremiah, told the people God's plain truth that judgment was coming in the form of Babylon under the leadership of King Nebudchanezzar. Still, the people rebelled because they were being led by wicked rulers and lying hypocritical preachers. They just would not listen to the true man of God. Looking back at Israel's history, we know that everything came to pass just like Jeremiah said it would. Therefore, I want us to take a deep look at the rest of this great warning chapter in God's Word and try to learn from Israel's disaster so that we don't make the same wicked mistake. But friends, don't be deceived! If God brought judgment on His chosen nation as I stated earlier, who do we Americans think we are that we would be spared from the wrath of a holy God? So, let's look into these final verses of this chapter and say, "Speak Lord, for thy servants are hearing."

A. Jeremiah's warning to the people was to stop listening to false preachers.
v. 16

In this verse, God tells Judah to stop listening to these false hypocritical preachers immediately because these charlatans have selfish motives to promote their own visions for their personal achievements and money. And, it was because of these lying prophets that the land was full of profane wickedness, and in fact, these so-called spiritual leaders were not only encouraging others to sin, but they were setting terrible examples of wickedness for the people to follow.

Folks, do you remember those fallen preachers here in America, Africa, and other countries? Well if you do, you will also remember the damage these perverted crooks did to the people who followed them, and to the Kingdom of God as well. These kind of phonies make it extremely hard to win other people to Jesus when they have lived and preached lies! Don't forget, judgment is coming soon!

B. Jeremiah's warning to the people was to stop listening to false promises.
vs. 17-18

In these two verses God speaks to the people who now despise Him and through His prophet He tells them to stop listening to these hypocritical preachers, and to stop believing their lies that peace is coming and everything is going to be alright. Then God says, these lying preachers have caused the people to chase vanity and be empty on the inside. You see folks, vanity may be defined as chasing after the wind. In other words, the people were living in a fantasy world believing that God's blessings were still coming when in truth, only

judgment was on the way. God said that the preachers were preaching visions from their own hearts rather than the truth of His Word.

There are many modern day examples of these phony prophets who not only preach lies, but they sensationalize every text they try to preach believing that if they make their message sensational, they can persuade the large audiences to send in seed money and then God will repay them one hundred fold. There is nothing wrong with supporting good biblically sound preachers, but to support these phony hypocrites and send them money expecting much in return is just flat sinful. Many of these charlatans rip off widow ladies and other small income people just simply by lying to their hearers and promising them wealth, success, and complete healing while they live in huge many million dollar homes, drive luxury cars, fly private jets, and yes, wear glasses for their eyes, and never feel one bit of guilt for stealing from struggling humans. And, having worked in Africa for many years, I see these corrupt preachers steal from the Africans who live in abject poverty and never think twice about it. Let me just give you some of these phonies that I have watched for many years. Whether you agree with me about these people, I believe Jeremiah would.

There is Creflo Dollar who is worth over \$25 million dollars, and he attempts to raise \$60 million for a private plane while hundreds of his church members do without basic necessities while being squeezed by their health and wealth pastor to keep giving more. And while he takes in all of this money, world missions suffer and an estimated 80,000 people die lost in the world every twenty-four hours. I could write in detail about scores of others, but for the sake of time and space, I wonder what the prophet Jeremiah would say about Benny Hinn, Joyce Myers, Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, Reinhard Bonnke, T.B. Joshua, Sign Fireman, Chris Oyakhilome, Jeremiah Ejikeme, Samuel Abiara, Jessie Duplantis, Rod Parsley, and many others who use their position and power to promise miracles, health and wealth, and scores of other things. Some are now even selling annointed prayer clothes, annointed underwear, and scores of other ridiculous things. All of these things are done to merchandise the Gospel and promote hypocritical religion. May God forgive these schysters, and may God raise up some genuine preachers like the late Adrian Rogers, David Jeremiah, Charles Stanley, Ed Young, Sr., the late W.A. Criswell, Dr. Billy Graham, Dr. Franklin Graham, the late Dr. Jerry Falwell, Dr. Johnny Hunt, Dr. Junior Hill, Dr. Bill Stafford, the late Dr. James Kennedy, the late Dr. Homer Lindsay, Dr. Jerry Vines, and on and on I could go, but space won't permit. The only problem is that many of these dear servants of God have already gone home, and my cry is, "Who is going to take their places?"

C. Jeremiah's warning to the people was for them to start looking for future punishment. vs. 19-28.

Well beloved folks, as I stated earlier, God's patience wore thin and there was nothing left to do but to start looking for God's punishment upon the Southern Kingdom. Therefore, this is what Jeremiah told the people they needed to do, and still, his words were rejected. So, if we spurn God's grace and mercy, there is nothing left but certain punishment. Let's take a look at these next verses to see how God tried to warn Judah, but the people said leave us alone and let us do our own thing in our own way. Well friends, if you want to do your own thing and in your own way, then you must expect God's judgment because our eternal relationship with Him which we started the day we got saved, is not a game which we play. Just remember, God has the final word.

1. Notice the severity of the coming punishment. v. 19

In verse 19, we are told that God's coming judgment on Judah would be so severe that it would be like a whirlwind going forth with much fury. We here in America might think of this as a tornado that suddenly appears out of the sky with very little warning. The strength of this tornado will be extremely furious, and so it was when Babylon came in to destroy Jerusalem in the days of Zedekiah the king. The entire land of Israel was over taken and multitudes that were not slain in the bloodbath were taken to Babylon. The proud constituency of Israel had been living in pleasure and vile wickedness, and now everything was lost. So, Jeremiah warns the guilty evil doers that the judgment would begin with those who had mocked God and scorned His Word.

Is God going to bring sudden judgment to America? As I was talking to a dear pastor friend this morning, I sincerely believe that God's judgment is not very far away for this God-blessed nation if we don't repent and get on our knees and plead for forgiveness immediately. When Jeremiah warned Judah, the coming judgment would be about nine or ten years away. I wonder if we have much more time than that!

2. Notice the Source of the coming punishment. v. 20

Now those of you who don't believe in the holiness or justice of God, but you only believe He is a frail little old man sitting up in heaven with love and tears in His eyes, will not accept the

fact that God is indeed the Source of the coming punishment. He was planning to use the wicked nation of Babylon, but Babylon could never have conquered Judah unless God had taken down the hedge like He did for the devil to get to Job. As for today here in our beloved America, we have assisted God in taking down the protective hedge just simply by destroying the walls of our culture by removing the Ten Commandments, taking prayer out of our schools, and by trying to make us a secular nation by removing the Bible from society. We have supported those who would remove every vestage of our Christianity by remaining silent when we should have been crying out and confronting the hypocrisy in our land. And while we have not taken a stand against our sinking culture, we have given ourselves to those easy preachers who promise false lies and promises because we are addicted to the pleasures and the lusts of the flesh while totally forsaking Biblical principles for our homes and families. Please God, forgive our sins and save our country for the sake of our children before it is too late! Just remember that the same loving compassionate God that sent Jesus to the cross for our sins is also a God of holiness, justice and righteousness. We can't believe in a one sided Gospel. God is the Source of our coming punishment!

One final thought on this verse! This verse tells us that the constant thought on God's heart was the execution of judgment upon Israel because of their sin. Obviously, Judah had no clue that just as God loved them and cherished a relationship with the leaders, the preachers, and the people, He also demanded righteousness. Based upon this truth, God would ultimately carry out the punishment regardless of what they thought the people would not repent. Therefore, we need to remember that even when it seems that God is no where to be found in judgment because He is very patient, He will carry out righteous judgment to the wicked eventually, and we can be assured of this. His delay in bringing judgment to America is just simply because of His patient kindness, hoping that our nation will repent.

3. Notice the subjects of this punishment. vs. 21-22

These are two very scary verses. In verse 21, God tells Judah through Jeremiah the prophet that He had not sent these phony prophets, and yet they were telling people that He had. Also, God had not given these hypocrites their message, but yet

they were lying and telling the people that God had commissioned them to speak. Thus, not only was their message a lie, but they were lying about their authority. And almost any person would know that you never speak on behalf of a ruler unless he has indeed commissioned you to do so. Therefore, these false servants were going to be judged for two brazen sins; false authority and false messages.

Verse 22 is a "but if" statement! God tells the leaders and the people that if these prophets had done what they were supposed to have done and preached God's message, then the people would have repented of their sins and God would have forgiven them. And, because of this, the judgment of God would not have been on the way. Folks, can you see just how much responsibility and guilt was placed upon these hypocritical preachers? The truth was and still is that the conditions in any country will always be according to the preaching of the preachers, whether good or bad. May God send some genuine men of God to us here in America, and also to other countries as well. The need is so great and the consequences are so solemn.

4. Notice the surety of this punishment. vs. 23-24

These two verses are profound! In these verses God tells Judah that if they think they will be the exception to receiving His judgment, well, they better think again. Why? Because God is not somewhere off in a far country knowing nothing about what is going on. In fact, He is very near and He knows everything that these leaders and people were doing. God even speaks somewhat facetiously and says, "do you think you can hide from me?" Then, He tells them it is absolutely impossible for them to hide from Him because He is everywhere all at the same time. In other words, He is omniscient, He is omnipresent, and He is very aware of what all of them were doing.

And yet beloved friends, there are still multitudes even today who reason that they can get by with their sins and will never have to pay the price for their wrong. This is so illustrated by young people who sincerely believe that they can steal, rob people, hurt people, damage other people's property, and commit any crime they choose, although the prisons are absolutely full of people that thought the same foolish

thoughts. Why is it that we believe everyone else might have to answer to God, but surely not us? I personally believe it is just simply a Satanic lie from the pits of hell that Satan uses to ultimately destroy lives and souls. Yes, Judah thought God had gone on vacation and didn't know anything about what was going on with His people. And yet even today, multitudes convince themselves that they will be the exception to God's rules of assured judgment for those who break His laws and disobey His Word. Let me declare that any man is truly a fool to believe that God will give him an out when everyone else has to answer to God.

5. Notice the sanity of this punishment. vs. 25-27

A few chapters earlier in the **Book of Jeremiah, Chapter 17, verses 9-10**, the Bible tells us that, "**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according the fruit of his doings.**" It is truly an astonishing thing to know that God constantly knows what is in our hearts, and also, upon whom or what our hearts are focused. In verses 25, God told the people that He had been listening to the false prophets as they shared their dreams instead of God's Word for Judah. The truth was that God was very sane about the insanity of these phony religious leaders who were deceiving the people terribly by lying to them about these so-called dreams they were having. This message was nothing more than intentional deception of the people to promote false peace, false assurance, and to project that the people were going to have a good destiny. The only problem was that it is truly impossible to have a good and fruitful destiny if you are presently living in rebellion and defiance of God.

When I first read verse 25, the first thing that came to my mind was these modern day charlatans who promise people great destinies without requiring repentance and turning from their sins. These false preachers today are doing the same damage to our civilization and culture that the false prophets and priests did in Jeremiah's day. If you would, just stop for a moment and think about all of these positive thinking preachers who rip and snort about us confrontational preachers being too brash, while they lie consistently to their people. And, they seemingly do this without giving much consideration to the judgment of God that is coming for both these preachers and their hearers.

In verses 26 and 27, God asks the question, **"How long shall this be in the hearts of the prophets that prophesy lies?"** This question shows the disgust and disdain that God has for these phony hypocritical preachers who deceive the people without conscience. God was truly fed up with these religious pretenders. And in verse 27, He reveals the motive of the false preacher's sermons, and that motive was to get the people in Judah to just simply forget the name of Jehovah God. Folks, can you believe how evil these preachers were? They were so determined to stop the reverence for and obedience to God that they would actually tell the people just to forget God. So truthfully, they were telling the people that Jehovah didn't really exist, and thus, it would be better to worship Baal. Do you know why they would rather worship Baal? Because Baal worship had room for any kind of sin, especially of the sexual lusts, every kind of perversion and debauchery. In other words, these prophets wanted the people to have a "feel good" and easy religion rather than to live lives of righteousness. Sounds like American preachers and people today! Would you agree? God used plain common sense to rebuke the insanity of these phony preachers and people.

6. Notice the symbol of this punishment. v. 28

In this verse, God tells the false preachers to go ahead and preach their phony dreams, and He says to the real preachers that they should just keep preaching God's Word. In other words, I believe God was saying to the false preachers, "your time is up", and He was saying to the genuine preachers to, "just stick by the stuff and keep telling the truth", because judgment was coming for the evil preachers and great rewards were coming for the true servants of God. And then, God illustrates this message by comparing real grains of wheat to the phony chaff. Let them grow together until the harvest, and then, the difference will be shown vividly. When all of us stand before Jesus, the real wheat will stand out and the phony chaff will be exposed and burned up. These false doctrine preachers will be judged for the terrible damage they have done to millions of people. I just had the urge to start giving names again, but I will leave that to Jesus Who knows all.

D. Jeremiah's warning was for the people to start living without the Father's protection. vs. 29-40

Just as I wrote this point, I began thinking about the sadness of the statement that I just wrote, and my heart just breaks beyond comprehension. Why? Just think about planning a future knowing fully well that because of the people's vile sins that God the Father would no longer offer His protection for His people. And, this would mean that God would not hear their prayers or show His presence to them. God was forsaking those who had claimed to be His children because they had forsaken Him. No more time for grace, mercy or forgiveness. All that remained to happen was the coming judgment of God upon the Southern Kingdom via the Babylonian army. Folks, can you envision the weeping mothers and screaming children as they saw their family members killed with swords, their houses burned, and their beautiful city of Jerusalem with its luxurious Temple razed to the ground? All of this and much more happened in 586 B.C., and true Jewish people and compassionate believers from all generations will always remember the destruction and devastation that came to God's chosen city because of the wickedness of its rulers, religious leaders, and worldly people that would not believe the Word of God which Jeremiah preached to the nation. May God help every nation in the world learn from the tragedy of Judah and never repeat the same mistake. Yet, it would seem that the more we cry out against the evil in our land, the more defiance and rebuttal we get from infidels.

1. This promise of the loss of protection included the absence of Divine grace. v. 29

I have been a born again believer for almost 60 years, and my relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ is all because of His amazing grace. I can't even imagine the terribleness of living in God's world without His grace. And yet, that is just exactly what God promised Israel through the prophet Jeremiah in this verse. Instead of God showing grace and mercy to His professed people, only judgment like a hammer against the rocks was coming for the people. No more grace because time had run out. God's patience had worn thin, and His day of grace and mercy was over. If you will stop for a moment and try to imagine the sound of a big hammer against flying rocks, I believe you will grasp the seriousness of the situation Israel was in. Do you hear the hammer? If so, let's learn from this solemn warning.

2. This promise of the loss of protection included the absence of Divine gain. vs. 30-32

These three verses are some of the most solemn words in all of the Bible. In these verses God told Judah that their days of blessings were gone because the false preachers had been making great promises and telling the people that the promises were from God. In fact, God had not told the preachers to make these promises, and these lies came from the corrupt dreams and visions of these phony prophets. They were lying to the people in order to make them feel good, hoping to get personal gain from the people. These lying prophets infuriated the Lord, and He told the people that these charlatans were preaching lies, and that God had not authorized the preachers to preach these positive words. Instead, God said that there would be no benefit or profit to the people from anything the preachers said because they had no way to bring these dreams to pass. But the people would rather believe a liar than to adhere to the Word of God through Jeremiah and repent of their sins. Folks, I believe the most worthless thing in the world is a lying preacher who promises things that God hasn't said, and that these shysters can't deliver. More damage has probably been done to our families and children down through the ages through these hypocrites than any other known disaster. It is truly serious to say, "that God has said, when in fact, God hasn't said it." So, let me ask you, "are you benefiting from your pastor's sermons where you attend church," if not, then you need to find you a Bible expositor and learn from him rather than these wolves in sheep's clothing!

3. This promise of the loss of protection included the absence of Divine guardianship. vs. 33-34

These two verses expand the truth that God is going to remove Himself from protecting the people of God, as He explicitly tells them in verse 34. In this verse He says to Israel, I am going to forsake you, and I am going to punish all of the crooked preachers and corrupt people. In other words, God was going to take down the walls of protection for the people of God, and for sure, this is what happened when Babylon attacked Jerusalem. And, these walls were never rebuilt until Nehemiah brought back a team from Persia and spearheaded the project to rebuild the walls of defense over seventy years later.

And folks, I would remind you for the practical application, the walls of a righteous culture will never be rebuilt in any nation until God's people do so with God's Word and by God's plan

This is why our children are in so much trouble today. No one has come to the forefront to rebuild the walls of our culture. The walls of God's law, spiritual morality, common decency, genuine Christianity, and many other positive things are gone in our land. Let's fervently pray that God will raise up some servants like Jeremiah who will have the guts to confront the phonies in all of our culture and expose the wrong and sinful motives that are taking our country down to hell. May there be a real revival at least for a remnant of God's people.

4. This promise of the loss of protection included the absence of Divine guidance. vs. 35-38

Have you ever been lost in some strange wooded area and felt the fear grip you and you didn't know what to do? Well, I have! This happened to me many years ago back in the early 1980's. My family and I had moved to a small town just outside of Lynchburg, Virginia, where I went to be the pastor of a struggling church. It was in the Fall of the year when the sun began to set earlier, and the temperature got cold quickly. Because I loved to go squirrel hunting, I decided one afternoon that I would take my first hunting trip into the woods near our new home that one of our dear ladies in the church owned. We had not lived there very long, so I didn't really know the lay of the land or the forest. But there were many big trees and I knew it would be quite a challenge because I had never been there before.

So, about 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon, I got my gun and walked behind our home and out into the strange forest. I began to move slowly further into the forest hoping to see some squirrels. I had been there just about an hour, when I saw a squirrel way up high in a tree, and when it saw me, it took off running from one tree to another way up high in the trees. I did a very foolish thing. I began to run after the squirrel while looking up into the trees until I got further and further away from where I went into the forest. Before I knew it, I looked behind me, and I absolutely did not know from which direction I had come. I went to the right for a good distance, and then I tried to the left. Before long, I knew that I was just going around in circles. I hate to admit it, but I was completely lost. I began to pray, and it didn't seem that God tried to help me. Shortly, the sun began to go down, and out in this very huge forest, it really began to get dark, and I finally just became extremely fearful. I didn't know which way to go, and I became

engulfed with uncertainty and fear. Then, I began to think about how I might have to spend the night in the forest, and so my fear increased. Would my family have to call a search team? Would I get cold and freeze by morning? I must tell you that I had never been in such a fix in my life! I just knew that when I was found, I would be the most embarrassed new pastor that had ever been. I would be the talk and mockery of the town. Now, my pride really kicked in, and I felt so stupid!

Then, I decided to pray again and beg God to help me. I did this, and just a few minutes later, I heard something that brought me great hope. I heard someone running a lawn mower, and I remembered seeing this man when I had walked to the woods. I listened to the sound of the mower and decided that I would walk toward the sound of that lawn mower so late that evening that I could see very little in the woods, but there was enough light outside the forest for the man mowing his lawn to still see. In just a little while I came close to the edge of the forest and I saw enough light to allow me to walk out of the woods and then to our house. I was so ashamed of what I had done, but this event surely taught me a great lesson about walking a strange pathway without proper guidance. And because this was before the days of the GPS and cell phones, I had no way to find my way. I never want to take any kind of trip or excursion without knowing where I would be going.

I have told you this little story from my life to tell you how much fear must have come into the hearts of the people in the Southern Kingdom when Jeremiah told them that God was removing His protection, and with this removal, He would no longer be providing guidance for them. They would truly be in a fearful place.

We find the truth that I have just shared with you in verses 35-38. In these verses we are told that Jeremiah told the false preachers who said they had God's burden on their hearts when they didn't, that the time would come when they would not be privileged to hear from God, and that He would surely forsake them. There would never been any guidance for them because they were going away to be lost from their homeland via the Babylonian army who was about to attack Jerusalem. So, the loss of God's protection and His nearness, would mean that they would not have His guidance for their lives. My question is, "What sin on earth is so enjoyable that it would be worth losing the protection and guidance of God for your lives?"

I don't know of one, and yet, Judah gave up the presence of God and His protection for the temporary pleasure of every kind of sin known to man.

And, so it is in this present wicked and immoral generation of people who value the satisfaction of the lust of the flesh that we see all around us here in America, and yes, in other countries as well. As the Bible says about Moses in **Hebrews 11:24-25, "By faith Moses, when He was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season:...."** My question is, "where are the people like Moses of this day?" Where are the people that will choose to say no to the temporary pleasures of sin for an eternal relationship with Jesus Christ in order to have His presence, His protection, and His guidance in their lives daily? I would pray that some of you reading this commentary might simply say yes, "I will be a great soldier for Jesus rather than to deny the Lord and rebuff His message. We need sincere believers who will follow Christ, even when it brings affliction rather than to cop out because of sinful desires.

5. This promise of the loss of protection included the absence of Divine glory. vs. 39-40 (Ichabod-The glory has departed!)

These last two verses in this study are so heart breaking! God tells the people through Jeremiah that it is all over for them, and He is literally going to forget them, or remove them from His thoughts simply because of their blatant sins and defiance toward Him. Yes, one day He would restore a remnant and bring them back into their land, but presently, God wanted them out of His mind and out of His presence. He also told them that because of their wickedness, their behavior and rebellion would bring reproach upon them and their children forever. Their lasting legacy would be that they were shameful in their conduct, and would bear this reproach for ever. Why? Because they brought terrible reproach upon the name of the Lord by their evil behavior! Time had truly run out, and now the shame and embarrassment would last forever. In other words, God's Divine glory had departed their nation, and figuratively speaking, He had written Ichabod over the nation of Israel. I can't even imagine living anywhere on earth without the glory of God, but it would seem that even here in America

we are sliding down the slippery slopes of darkness just waiting for the catastrophe to happen. My prayer to God, is please send us revival before it is too late for our beautiful land. I don't want to live without the glory of God in my life, in my family, in my church, and in my children and grandchildren, and yes, in our nation!

Conclusion

Well folks, we have now come to the conclusion of this wonderful study from Jeremiah, Chapter 23. I don't know if you have been blessed by this long exegetical work, but I must tell you that I have. I don't believe I have ever studied another passage of Scripture in all my life as a man of God which has broken my heart like this message from God through His prophet. Of course, I believe this has happened because as I have tried to write this Bible commentary verse by verse through the text, I have seen an absolute picture of the things that are now happening in this country just like they were in Judah the Southern Kingdom during the days of Jeremiah.

We too have wickedness all around us in our political leaders, our phony preachers, and in the God-blessed people in our land. Because of this, it would seem that the future for our children and grandchildren doesn't look very bright unless we return to God, repent of our sins, and plead with God to spare our land. Everywhere we look today, we can see blatant immorality, lying preachers who only tell what they think will stir their people to love them and give them more money, and we see evil politicians and the people who are openly rebelling against the truth of God's Word if it is preached like Jeremiah did!

These present days look dark for everyone, but the darker the darkness, the brighter the light of Jesus can and will shine. But this light cannot and will not shine unless true servants of God shine it into this dark world by telling and preaching the truth about the imminent judgment that is coming unless we turn back to God. Oh yes, as a born again believer, I long for the rapture of the church and the return of our Lord. Yet, we know that over two billion people in this world of seven billion have yet to hear the clear message that only Christ can save and take us to heaven. Therefore, we need to look toward the Eastern sky expecting His return every day, but yet, be very busy with the task of taking the Gospel message to the entire world. Folks, as an older pastor, I am tired in the battle, but not tired of the work for Jesus. I just want to keep going and telling the old old story that Jeremiah told Judah, and that judgment indeed is coming, but there is still hope if the nations will repent and turn back to God and His Word. Let's quit listening to these easy and light preachers who make false promises while they indulge in every kind of sin and corruption known to mankind. Let's fervently pray that God will raise up some young Jeremiahs who will pay the price to declare the truth of God's Word without fear or favor of any politician, any phony preacher, or even the multitudes of rebellious people that don't want to hear the truth. The only hope that America or any other nation has is in genuine repentance and spiritual revival as the people turn back to God.

